

Issue NE-CW0903, released March 3, 2003, by the Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA. For more information contact us at: 100 Centennial Mall North, Suite 298, Lincoln, NE 68508, 402-437-5541, e-mail at [nass-ne@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nass-ne@nass.usda.gov), Internet at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>.

**GENERAL:** For the month of February 2003, temperatures were mostly above normals for the third month in a row with the exception of the last week of the month, according to the USDA's Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service. February snows provided some cover for wheat but the western half of the state continued to be rated in extreme drought. Wheat condition remained well below last year. Producer activities included planning for the 2003 crop year, FSA sign ups, livestock care, and attending farm sales.

This release is based on reports and data from FSA county directors, county extension educators, NOAA, and the High Plains Climate Center. Current county specific comments plus current and historic PDF files of Weather and Crop reports can be found at: [http://www.nass.usda.gov/ne/cropwthr/cmts\\_cur.htm](http://www.nass.usda.gov/ne/cropwthr/cmts_cur.htm)

**WEATHER:** The present depth of snow statewide averaged less than an inch with some snow cover reported in all districts. February weekly temperatures averaged above normals the first three weeks and 11 to 22 degrees below normals during the last week of the month. Highest readings occurred during the third week. Statewide, moisture occurred during the first and last weeks of February in the form of snow.

**CROPS: Wheat** condition changed little this past month, rated 12 percent very poor, 20 poor, 44 fair, 23 good, and 1 excellent, but still remained well below last year's condition of 46 percent good or excellent. **Hay and forage** supplies were mostly adequate to short statewide. The open winter has allowed producers to utilize stalk residue and limit the feeding of hay supplies, although cold temperatures have increased supplemental feeding during the month.

**LIVESTOCK: Cattle and calves** condition rated 3 percent poor, 29 fair, 59 good, and 9 excellent. Calving progressed to 20 percent complete with some cold weather problems with newborn calves, although calf losses are mostly average to date. Supplemental feeding requirements increased during the month due to cold temperatures. Stalk fields continued to provide grazing potential.

**The following are comments from Nebraska's FSA County Executive Directors and county Extension Educators:**

#### *NORTH CENTRAL*

HOLT/BOYD: Continued dry conditions are still a concern. Livestock producers have culled heavily in preparation for another dry year. Grasshoppers are another concern.

#### *NORTHEAST*

ANTELOPE: Temperatures have been below normal which stressed livestock and caused above normal calf loss. The open winter has helped with the forage supplies. The colder temperature has caused more supplemental feeding. Problems with stored grain has been noted. DAKOTA: Cold weather in the last month coupled with deep snow has forced producers to feed hay. Many had not fed hardly anything up until now. This has brought down hay supplies in the area.

KNOX: The mild winter thus far has been a blessing for livestock producers. Calving has been going well thus far.

THURSTON: An open winter has allowed cow herds to remain on stalks most of the winter. Some supplemental feeding of roughage is being done. Lots of activity this past month for farmers in the office. Taxes, ordering and planning farm supplies and inputs for crop production, and working with the Farm Service Agency to get farms signed up in the new program have taken much of farmers time.

#### *EAST CENTRAL*

DODGE: Good weather conditions (as far as not much snow) has helped with the calving ease, however, producers need to keep a closer eye on things this week because of cold temps. Wheat condition is still in good shape. Producers are concerned with the sky-rocketing fertilizer and fuel prices.

NANCE/BOONE: Many farmers have been busy completing their income tax business and also completing sign up for the farm program. Calving season is about to go into full swing in the next two weeks.

YORK: A few farm auctions are being held. Due to the severe cold weather early this past week the cows have been brought in out of the stock fields and being fed hay preparatory to calving.

#### *SOUTHWEST*

FRONTIER: This last week has seen some moisture in the form of snow, with it came the extremely cold weather. Many producers are calving now. Many producers are feeding now and are worried that there will not be enough feed for the cows. The winter wheat has not had any measurable moisture for quite some time. Farm sales are still happening, seems like someone every week is throwing in the towel.

HAYES/HITCHCOCK: Extremely cold temperatures caused calves being born, that were not sheltered, to freeze to death. Wheat fields did get snow cover and that should help wheat conditions. Many farm sales in the area.

#### *SOUTH CENTRAL*

ADAMS: Recent snowfall has improved the soil moisture situation. Extreme temperature swings have made calving a bit more difficult. WEBSTER: There is still grave concern about the lack of subsoil moisture and lack of water in the Harlan County Reservoir for irrigation. Calving is in full swing and the weather has been very cooperative. Hay stocks are still plentiful due to the open winter and stalk usage. Pastures are a real concern due to lack of moisture.

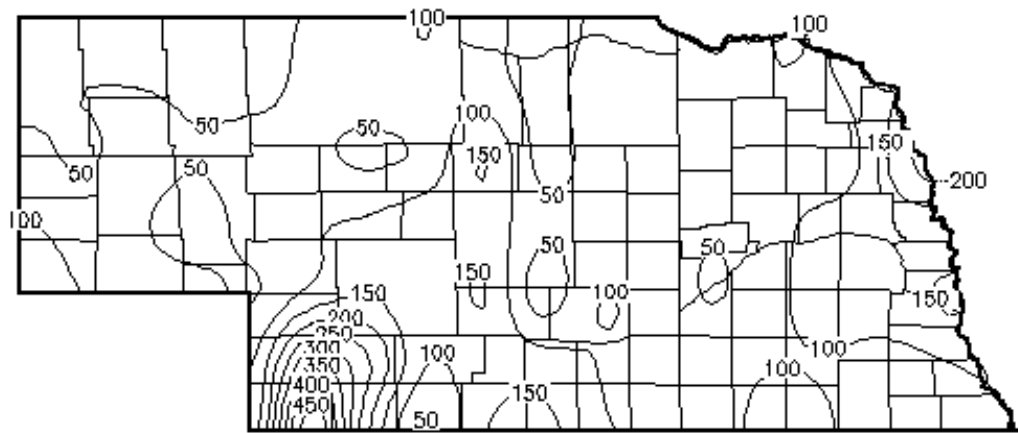
#### *SOUTHEAST*

NEMAHA/JOHNSON/PAWNEE: The winter wheat appears at this point to be over wintering in good condition. Cows have been able to utilize the corn and grain sorghum residue and have not been required to use the limited hay supply that is available. Most of the pastures are in an over grazed condition and grazing will need to be delayed so that the grass can recharge.

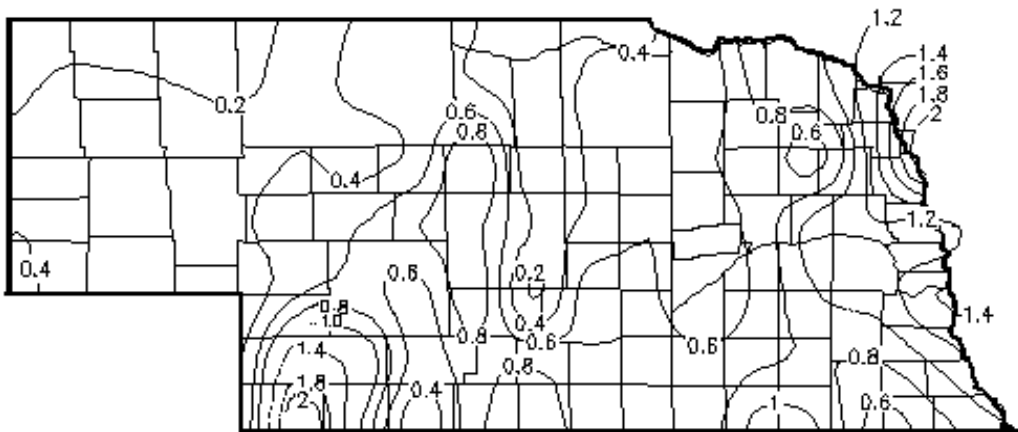
OTOE: There have been reports of some low birth weight calves, but in most areas of the county the calving has been normal.

PAWNEE: Ponds lower than normal. Farmers working on taxes etc, and choring.

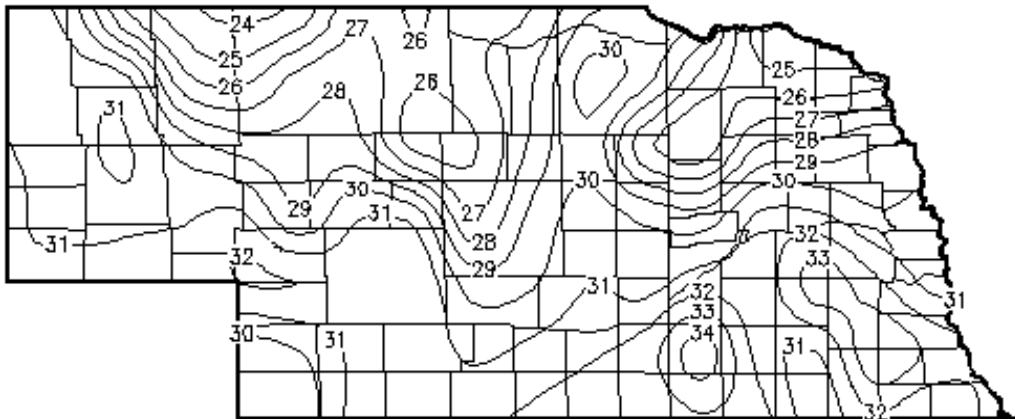
PRECIPITATION AS PERCENT OF NORMAL FOR FEBRUARY 2003<sup>1</sup>



PRECIPITATION IN INCHES FOR MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2003<sup>1</sup>



SEVEN DAY AVERAGE TEMPERATURE AT THE FOUR INCH DEPTH UNDER BARE SOIL<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Source: High Plains Regional Climate Centers Automated Weather Data Network (AWDN).